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SIPDIS

DEPT PASS TO DINT/USGS/RESTON/RPAQUETTE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: NEW ZEALAND COUNTRY CLEARANCE FOR USGS ROMEO FLORES, SEPTEMBER 2-25, 2004

REF: STATE 180956

1. Embassy welcomes and grants country clearance to U.S. Geological Survey Research Geologist Romeo Flores to travel to Christchurch, New Zealand from September 2-25, 2004. The purpose of this visit is to lecture at a seminar on coal bed natural gas and coal geology as the Erskine Fellow of the University of Canterbury.

2. Embassy understands no assistance is required.

3. Political Economic Section Office Manager contact details are as follows:

Office: 644-462-6033

Fax: 644-472-3537

Cell: 027-451-2540

E-mail: walshba@state.gov

4. Visitors should use local taxi service, which is generally safe, reliable and frequent. Taxi fare from the airport to downtown Christchurch hotels is approximately NZD35.

5. Travelers can exchange currency at the airport upon arrival and ATM machines are readily available throughout New Zealand.

6. Biosecurity Fines:

The government of New Zealand instituted fines for non-declared biosecurity hazards on travelers entering New Zealand with undeclared plant, animal or food material. Travelers found carrying these undeclared items will be immediately fined NZ\$200 (US \$150). Biosecurity is a serious issue in New Zealand and fines will be administered immediately and without warnings.

7. Security Assessment:

a. There are no local terrorist groups or support groups believed to be operating in New Zealand at this time. In light of the worldwide security alert all visitors should heighten their security awareness and report any unusual incidents to the regional security office.

b. Anonymous telephonic threats and obscure threat mail have occasionally targeted U.S. diplomatic missions in New Zealand. In response to U.S. policies and actions, various groups in New Zealand have demonstrated occasionally at the embassy in Wellington and at the consulate in Auckland. These demonstrations were of a small scale and were peacefully conducted. During these demonstrations, the host country police and protective services provided adequate protection to the embassy and consulate.

c. While New Zealand is considered a low threat crime environment, Wellington and Auckland have experienced an increase in violent and petty crimes. Home invasion robberies and assaults, once very rare, are becoming more frequent. Burglaries and thefts occur countrywide. Visitors should be aware that street crime is a daily occurrence in the larger cities, including Wellington and Auckland. Common sense precautions should be taken, especially at night, to avoid becoming a target of opportunity.

d. All forms of public transportation are generally safe at all times of the day.

Swindells